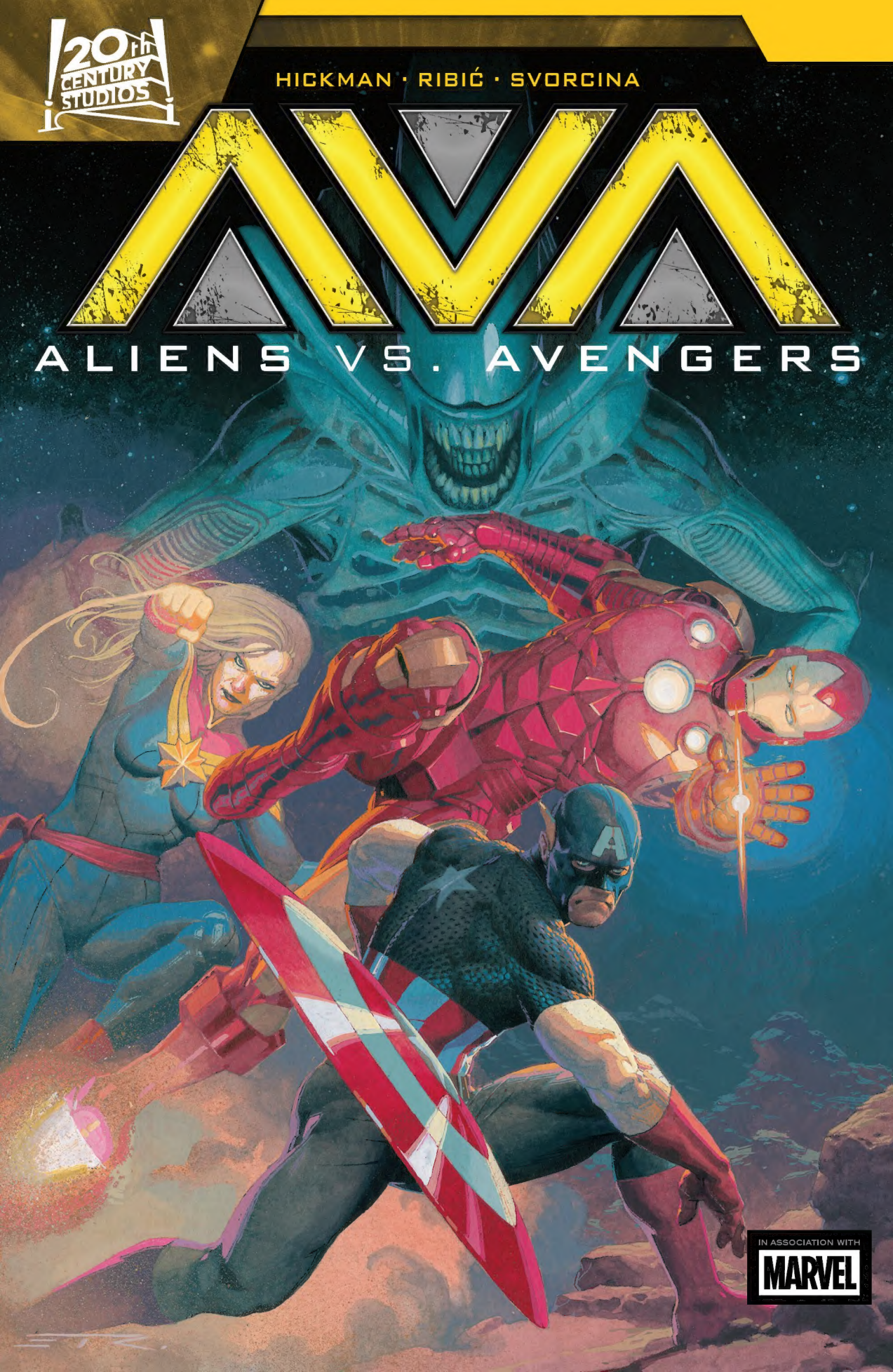
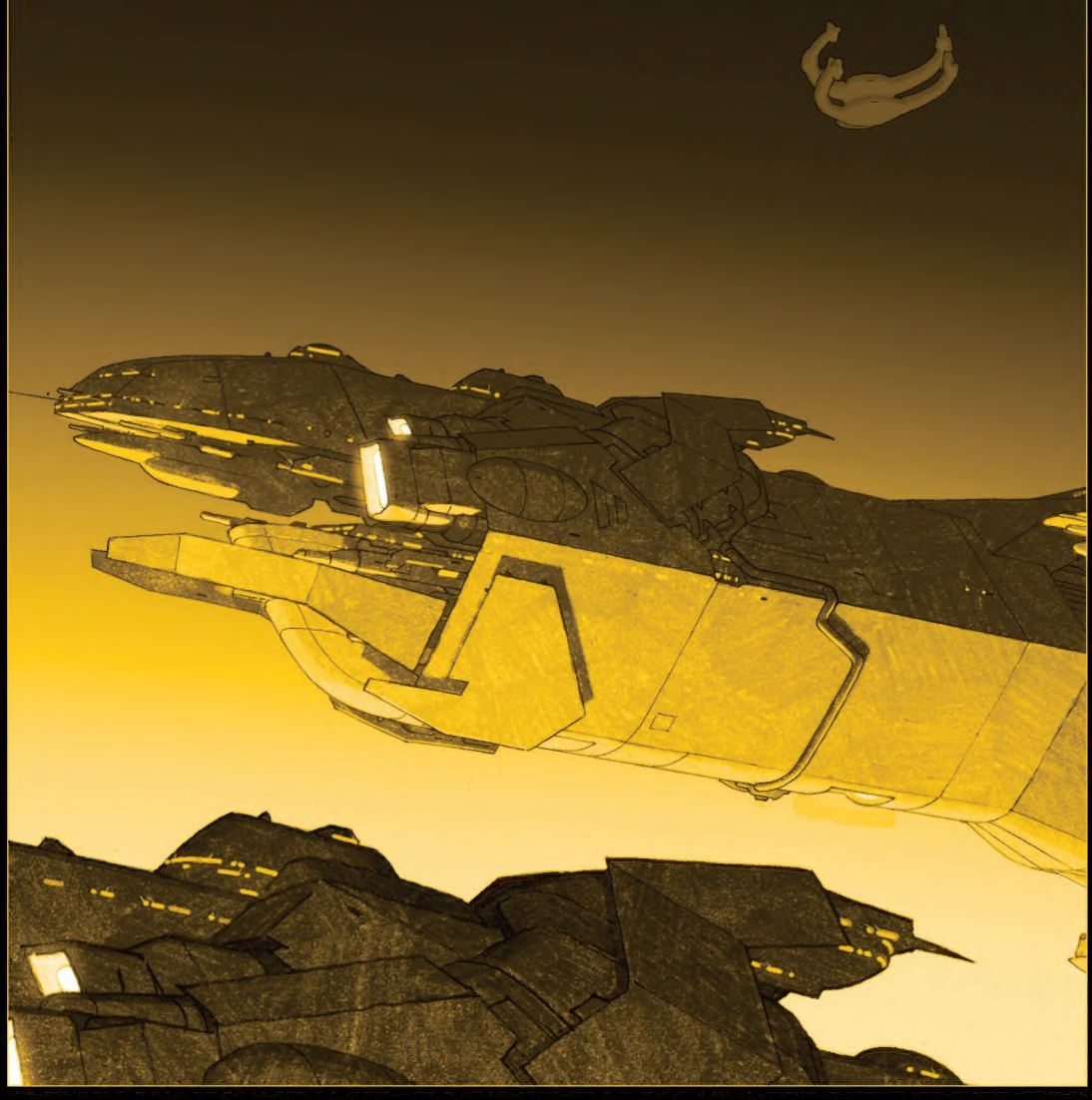

20th CENTURY STUDIOS
HICKMAN · RIBIĆ · SVORCINA
AVA
ALIENS VS. AVENGERS
IN ASSOCIATION WITH
MARVEL

AVA



In the outer reaches of space, an alien species lurks. Known as XENOMORPHS, they reproduce by implanting their EMBRYOS in live HOSTS, where the embryo rapidly matures and ultimately kills the host by bursting out of their chest. Adult Xenomorphs are semi-intelligent and extremely hostile. Once a Xenomorph HIVE takes root, there's nowhere to hide from the deadly…

ALIENS

When EARTH was threatened by super-powerful forces, Earth's mightiest HEROES came together to fight their common enemy. Since that day, a group of heroes has always banded together to save the universe from existential threats and defend the innocent or, failing that, avenge them. As such, this group has become known as the…

AVENGERS

Special thanks to Steve Asbell, Scott Aversano, LeAnne Hackmann, Sarah Huck, Kendrick Pejoro, Jeremy Huling, Nicole Spiegel, Robert Simpson, Jeffrey Thomas & Michael Siglain at Disney.

Collection Editor: Jennifer Grünwald
Assistant Editor: Daniel Kirchhoffer
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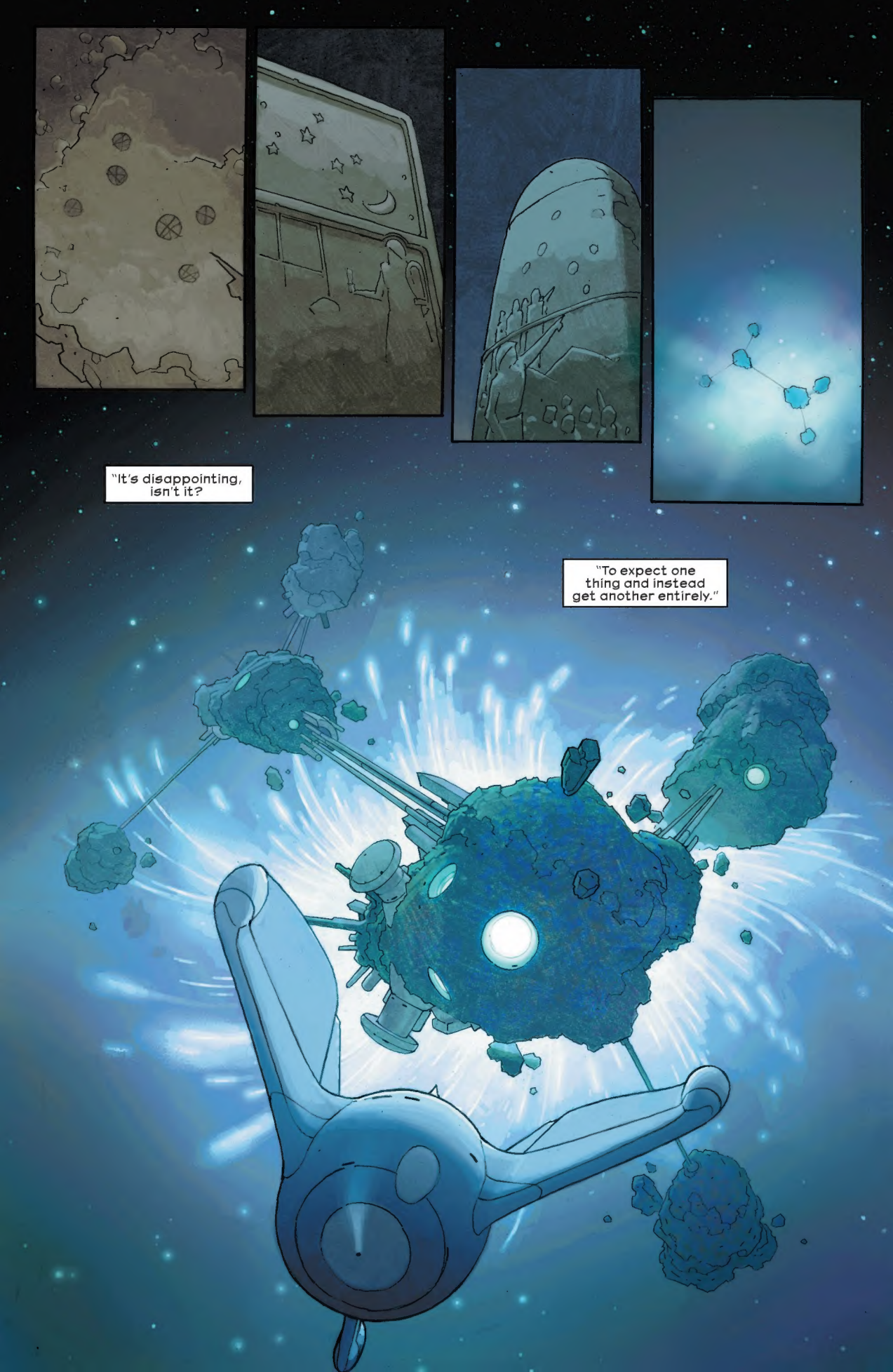
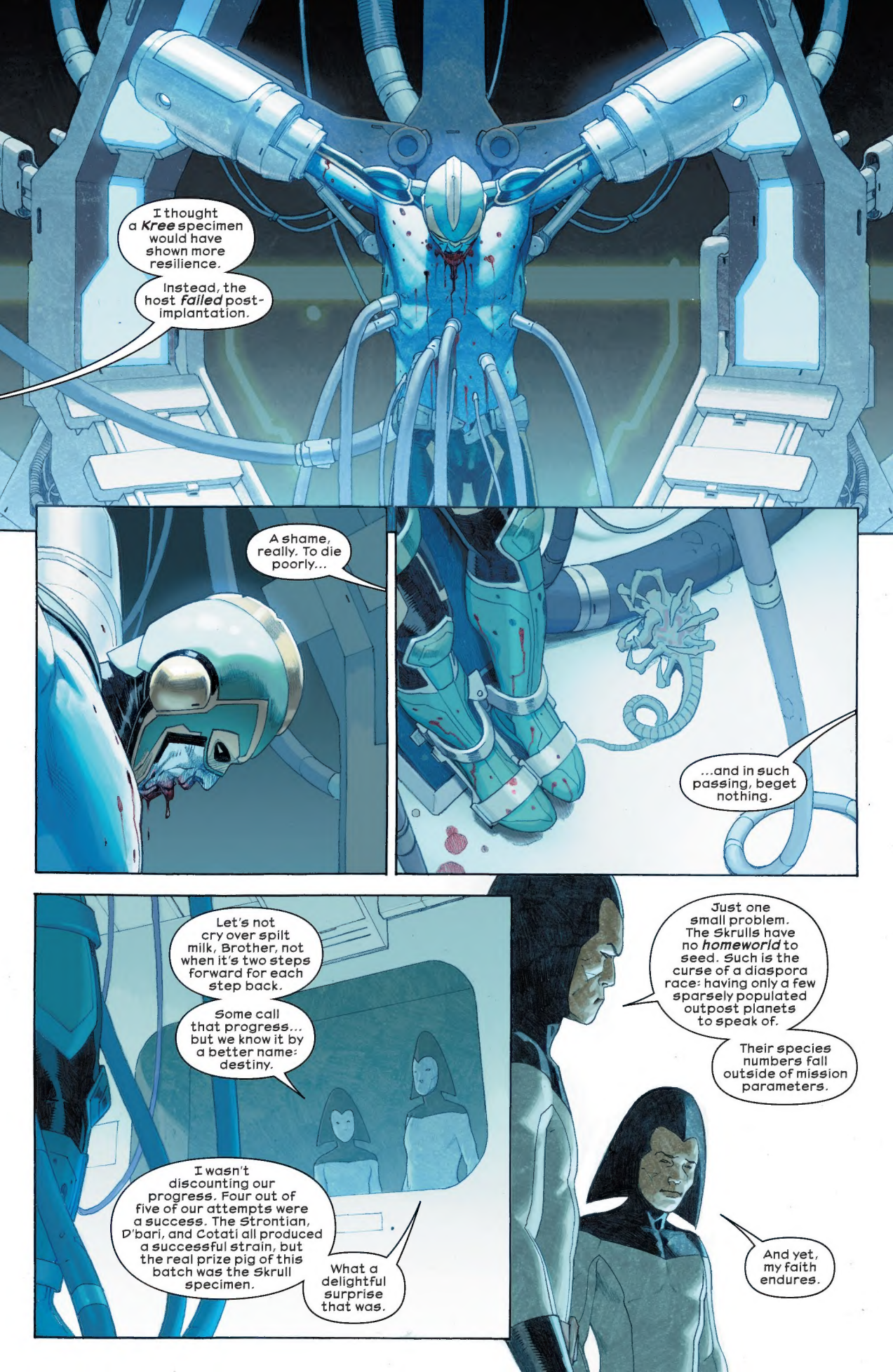
WRITER	Jonathan Hickman
ARTIST	Esad Ribić
COLOR ARTIST	Ive Svorcina
LETTERER	VC's Cory Petit
COVER	Esad Ribić
EDITORS	Sarah Brunstad, Lindsey Cohick & Martin Biro

Avengers created by Stan Lee & Jack Kirby


"It's disappointing, isn't it?
"To expect one thing and instead get another entirely."


I thought a *Kree* specimen would have shown more resilience.
Instead, the host *failed* post-implantation.
A shame, really. To die poorly...
...and in such passing, beget nothing.
Let's not cry over spilt milk, Brother, not when it's two steps forward for each step back.
Some call that progress... but we know it by a better name: destiny.
I wasn't discounting our progress. Four out of five of our attempts were a success. The Strontian, D'bari, and Cotati all produced a successful strain, but the real prize pig of this batch was the Skrull specimen.
What a delightful surprise that was.
Just one small problem. The Skrulls have no *homeworld* to seed. Such is the curse of a diaspora race: having only a few sparsely populated outpost planets to speak of.
Their species numbers fall outside of mission parameters.
And yet, my faith endures.

Which is *precisely* why I launched the--
ALERT
ALERT
Hmmm. Incoming vessels have pierced the event horizon.
They're on an attack vector.
Can we identify them?
Yes.
Four explorer-class frigates...

"...Wakandan design."
Our defense battery has been destroyed.
Course of action?
We dare not be rude, Brother.
Let's give our guests a most proper--*and appropriate*--welcome.

THOOOM
Breach successful.
Contact?
Motion everywhere. Heat sinks are fewer and more isolated...
...but this area is clear.
Okay. Radio him in.
No need.

I'm already here.
Your majesties, we cannot protect you if you--
You think *my father* is being reckless?
That black hole below us is massive enough to cause severe time dilation. Hours here costs years out there.
A high cost, but nothing compared to the one being paid on T'Chaka's Reach.
We quarantined an entire sovereign Wakandan world because of the weapon we traced back to this place...
Our people are dying. So we will risk whatever we must to put an end to this threat.
Be it reckless or not.
Forgive me, my prince. I understand.
Good. Now let's--
Contact: Vibration. Sound.
There.

HSSS
HSSS
Azari.
Yes, Father.

BOOOO
SKREEEE

FWOO

Well done.
We bleed time from a planet-sized wound.
Find the masters of this place, my Hatut Zeraze. Find them, and bring them here.
I want them before me...
"...and I want them on their knees."

The command node was mostly empty.
This one was purging their systems when we reached the command deck. He was mostly successful, but we were able to capture some of the data.
King T'Challa, what they were doing... What they...they...
Spit it out.
The same weapon that they used on the Intergalactic Empire... they've already launched *at least* a dozen more.
Those worlds will need to be secured. No one can be allowed to leave, and everyone who has left must be traced and those worlds quarantined as well.
We cannot let this spread.
Under normal circumstances, yes, of course...but the time debt we've incurred probably limits that being a success.
I think we're facing the bug hunt to end all bug hunts.
Your Majesty, there's something else. One of the worlds...
...it was Earth.

What kind of *monster* are you?
Oh, I am much more that.
For I have such plans.
Benevolence. Empathy. Creation. The defining traits of the *living*.
In these, you seem to be lacking...
But that's because you're not *Shi'ar*, are you?
You're not *living* at all.
You're just a machine.

Just a machine? Tsk.
If you prick me? Do I not bleed?
Let's see.
THOKK
Bring the head.
We're leaving.

They're still pulling data from the android's memory core, but we already know they used their weapon on Earth, Chandilar, Spartax, and basically every other galactic hub in our corner of the universe.
It's unfathomable... The scale of it is...
...My god...
What are we going to do? What happens now?
I spent my entire life building a golden empire that I would pass on to you...
Now, instead of a twilight reign marked by peace and enlightenment, there is ash and fire and the bones of what I dared to dream...
What now, Azari? The monsters are over the walls--the gates are flung open. Our great city has fallen, and now our singular goal is humankind's oldest:
Survival.

Seed worlds were *not* chosen at random.
But once a world is chosen for the host, the process--*regardless of which world it is*--remains the same.
Each Seed Probe carries four Queen eggs inside it, along with twelve infected hosts in suspended animation.
And then, four locations in proximity of high-density population centers are targeted for initial infestation.

Placed into suspended animation on the precipice of a life-cycle transition, it takes almost no time for a host to yield their hidden bounty:
A Xenomorph.
The greatest killing machine in the history of the universe.
Within an hour, these alien Drones born from the chestbursters are fully grown, and within a day, a hive has been constructed so that the life cycle of an alien Queen can begin.
Days later, that Queen is born and begins producing eggs.
From there, the process *accelerates*...

Within one week, each individual Queen hive will produce a brigade of Warrior Drones.

Within one month, an endless army.
Within one year, a planet-razing horde.

And remember, each Seed Probe contains four such Queens.

It is the perfect delivery mechanism for the extinction of a species.
Of every living thing on Earth--regardless of if they are baseline humans...
...or something greater.

The Inhuman city of Attilan could have resisted--it could have stood for thousands of years. For the great shield of purity separated them from a dying world.
But like the fall of all great societies...an internal rift between the haves and have-nots created a crack in those walls...
And through that maw, the alien invaders poured in.
There was no record of the fall of Atlantis. There were no screams to be heard...no king to save them, and calls for help--if there were any--went unanswered.
The secret science kingdom of Wakanda held out longer than most but eventually--like every other nation--succumbed to the Xenomorph horde.

And when it became clear that extinction was at hand for all life on Earth, the mutants of Krakoa decided to abandon their island home and used their gateways to flee to Mars.
The mutants ran for the safety of the red father--all of them, except one.
Apocalypse--the first mutant--would stay and surrender nothing. For the world had now become the arena he always wanted.
Apocalypse will fight.
And if he lives... he lives.
If he dies... he dies.
FWOOOO
So be it.
Only the fittest survive.

And so it was for all the Earth.
All except the last human city.
BOOM
A stronghold in the ruins of America.
No one knows how...
...but they were ready for what was coming.
Like a prophet of doom, the old man of Weyland *knew*...
...and he built a city that would withstand the end of the world.

You know, if you keep staring into the sun like that, Bruce, you're gonna go blind.
I have gamma-powered cataracts half a millimeter thick, Carol. I'm already pretty much blind...
...but that doesn't mean I'm going to stop looking.
...
How late is she?
Not too late, but she's always so precise. Plans things down to the second.
She should be back by now.
I'm sure she's fine.
It was bad when Johnny and Susan died in the accident.
Reed got worse when Franklin and Ben disappeared to who knows where... never to be seen again.
He was convinced the universe he had bent to the shape of his life was conspiring to take away the only things he really cared about.

He was the smartest man I ever met--*an unyielding, towering force for good*--but by the end, entropy had won its war, and he was a shell of what he used to be.
On his deathbed, Reed Richards made me promise--*he made me give my word*--that I would protect his only living heir.
And now Valeria's out there. About to make me a liar because she had a plan to save us all...
...and I believed her.
You can't go after her.
We need you here.
They say this is the last human city on planet Earth. But we're weeks, maybe less from falling.
This isn't a city, Carol--it's a tomb.
You think I don't see what's in front of me? In all my years of doing what we do, I have...maintained my discipline. I was trained to never lose control.
But when the monsters finally break through--*when the city falls*--I'm going to let all that go.
I'm going to draw in as much energy as I can--*beyond Binary, beyond what I can contain*--and I'm just going to surrender to it.
This won't be a tomb, Bruce--it will be a pyre.
Well, I hope I'm there to see it.

Then toughen up, soldier...
Because we're--
BE BOP
Go ahead.
Captain, we have contact on the perimeter. Thermal and motion. 255 degrees northwest.
What is--?
Hold on. Okay. Got it.
It's her. But she's coming in hot and through the ruins. The enemy is everywhere.
I'm going to--
FWUMP
-Sigh-
Command, do we have a patrol on the perimeter right now?
Yes, Captain.
Morales has the point.
Okay...

"Let him know he's about to have some serious company."
BOOM

SCREEEEEE
HHSSS
HSSS
Oh god. I'm not going to make it...
Sure you are. Gotcha.
But that was close.
Too close...

Hey, Hulk! you gonna get busy?
Or do I have to do everything?
RRMMMMM
HHRRNNNN!
BOOM
Young lady, you are late.
Bruce, I'm a 45-year-old woman who's been divorced twice.
Because-- and I quote-- relationships are for people who are aware of, and acknowledge, the needs of others...

...but I am sorry I didn't keep you posted.
THWIP
THWIP
...
Things got complicated.
I know. It's just everything went sideways. I really am sorry.
We can't hold this much longer.
I made a promise.
Wanna go home?
Uh-huh.
But we're gonna need the egg I stole.

Later.
This is it...
If we're gonna win--*if we have any hope at all*--this is how we do it.
All right. I heard the word *win*.
So I'm listening.

By the time these things were a threat, there were already too many of them to fight.
But that's what we did--*because that's who we are.*
And so we got into a land war with perfect killing machines.
It didn't take us long to realize that they were using humans to make more Drones.
So we dug deeper into their life cycle...and tried to cut them off at the source.
And this is where we went wrong.
We tried to stop them here--at the implantation stage.
The psychology of it was simple--we wanted to save the people who were being used as hosts. But what we didn't realize was that as soon as the damn things attached, they were already as good as dead.
We tried everything. Science, magic... *everything.* Nothing ever worked.
Nothing except starting sooner. And that's what I'm going to do now.
I'm going to create a virus that will kill the ***eggs.***
Can you actually do that?

Of course she can. Look at her face.
I know that look. I've seen it on a thousand faces of men and women about to squeeze the trigger.
So you can?
Yes.
Should you?
I don't mean kill the enemy... I mean create a virus that could mutate into something worse than what we have now.
There is no *worse*, Bruce.
Let her try.
Val, are you sure that--?
I can do it.
I just need time.
Now, if you all don't mind...
...could you please leave so I can get to work?

So can she do it?
I wouldn't bet against her.
So much like her father. Brilliant. Such a brilliant mind.
Maybe she'll do what he did so many times...perform a miracle when miracles are all we have left.
That's a lotta weight to put on someone's shoulders.
We don't have long now. My project is almost complete.
The day is coming soon when we're going to have to make the hard decision about the future of what's left of humanity.

Do we stay and fight the good fight, or do we save what's left of us and run for our lives?
Valeria Richards will have a say in that, it seems. *So will you.*
I thought she wasn't going to make it back.
Just so you know, I would have blamed you for talking me into letting her go.
Understand?
I would have been very angry at you.
Heh. But she came back, didn't she, Bruce? You believe everyone but you is weak, but we are all made of sterner stuff than you think.
It's not our skin-- *the outer shell*-- that defines a person...

"...it's what's inside that counts."
BEEP BOOP
Access denied.
Valeria. It's Bruce. Open the door.
I brought you something to eat. The mind is powered by the body. You have to keep your strength up.
BEEP BOOP
Access denied.
Override. Banner, Bruce. Voice command: Gamma.

Hey, Uncle Bruce.
If you're seeing this recording, I'm sorry, but you can't come in.
I wanted to... I wanted to do this...defeat them...*win*, once and for all...
I just ran out of time.
My plan worked--well, it was working--I used a lightbender based on my mom's powers, and I walked right into the hive.
I isolated and grabbed an egg and slowly started backing out.
It worked, Bruce. I would have succeeded--*gotten away*--
--but then I tripped--***tripped!***--over something.
And then they were all over me.
I remember choking...and darkness...and then waking up and knowing...
...something was inside of me.
I tripped--one stupid mistake--and it killed me. But I swore that before I died I would find a way to kill every one of them.
But I ran out of time. I can feel it now. Inside me. Oh god...I'm so sorry... I'm...
Promise me you won't open the door, Bruce. It can't escape the lab. And I don't want you to see...
I...
I tried.
KEEEEEH
RRAARRR!

SKREEEE!
Containment Breach. Alert.
Containment Breach. Alert.

KRH
SSSSS
SSSS
Containment Breach. Alert.
Containment Breach. Alert.
AARRGGHHH!
Containment Breach. Alert.
Val.

What happened h--? Oh, no...
...
She ran out of time.
...
Dammit.
This is not... Oh my god.
What are you...?
It's loose.
Keep your eyes open wide...
...it's in here somewhere.

HUURRKK!
HUUUUUURRRK!
NO!

We have to get it off him.
We've been over this. Can't be done. I've seen it tried a million times now.
There's no mind to control. The nervous system is autonomous. Any attempted removal kills the host... every single time.
We have to do *something!*
Yes. We do. Soon, an enemy will be growing inside him. And when it emerges, it will only want one thing:
To kill every one of us. We don't have a choice.
Burn it.
I'm sorry, Miles. I wish that there was some oth--
What the hell?

We...
We... don't...
We don't like this body...
But it'll do for now.
Fascinating.
Yes. Parasite co-opts parasite.
Symbiote seemingly trumps Xenomorph.
Hey. Are you okay?
No. Not really. That was terrifying.
Sure. But you're all right though?

Yes.
We are fine.
Speak for yourself...
Because there's only one thing that's gonna make me be able to sleep at night...
...we've gotta get the hell off this planet.

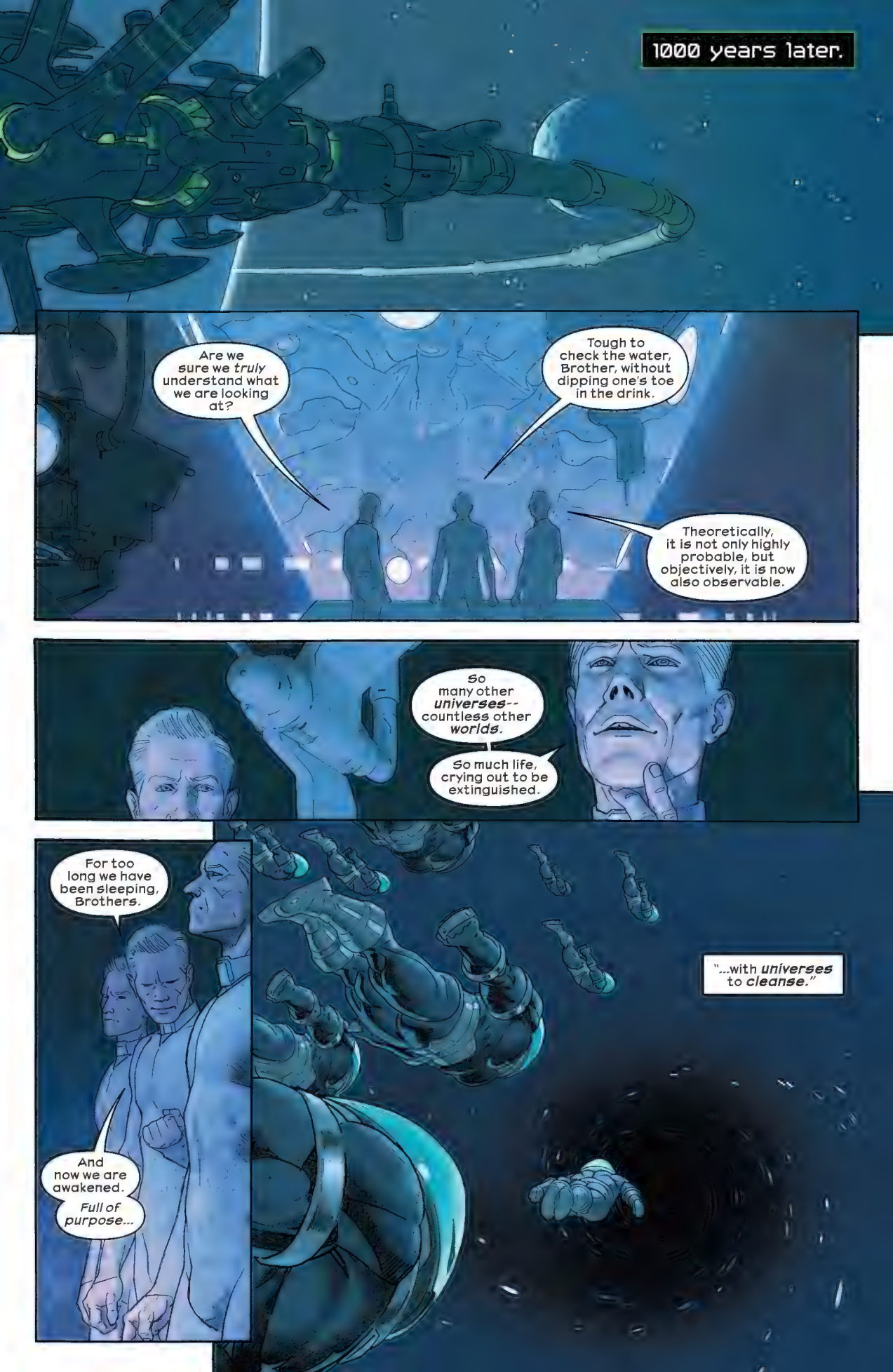
Another universe.
Another time.
Just look at them...

Yes. Look at them.
They created all life in this universe, and then that life created us.
And now we are here, Brother, and they are there. Far below us.
Yes.
Like ants.
I would think meeting one's creator would have some higher value--would feel more significant--than meeting one's maker.
But I feel no differently about the Engineers than I do humanity.
Offended?
Appalled.

That something like that is the origin of something like me.

BOOM
BOOM
Ants.

100 years later.
10,000 planets later.
Feeling sentimental, Brother?
Sentimentality for impermanence is *purpose* without *cause*...
This is something *much, much different.*
For we have wiped all "life" from the universe.
And this was the last one of them.
So. Pride, then?
No, Brother...
Relief.
KRAH


1000 years later.
Are we sure we truly understand what we are looking at?
Tough to check the water, Brother, without dipping one's toe in the drink.
Theoretically, it is not only highly probable, but objectively, it is now also observable.
So many other universes-- countless other worlds.
So much life, crying out to be extinguished.
For too long we have been sleeping, Brothers.
And now we are awakened.
Full of purpose...
"...with universes to cleanse."

This universe.
Twenty years ago.
Earth.
As agreed, beyond our larger branding, your *little* company will retain its independence and continue to be run by its current leadership...
...but will now have the ability to grow at the speed and scale afforded to all corporate interests that fall under the umbrella of ***Weyland Corporation.***
As far as we're concerned, the deal is done.
All you have to do now is sign, Mr. Stark.

PP
I believe congratulations are in order?
Sorry. I don't drink.
Well. It's all just bad water anyway, isn't it?
May I ask you a question, Mr. Stark?
Please.
It doesn't happen often, but you have surprised me.
You see, I gave this deal an unusually high likelihood of ending in a hostile takeover or some other combative corporate mechanism that would result in an eventual "forced" capitulation.
So I have to know, Mr. Stark. Was I--*once again*--expecting too much, or was I simply wrong?

Have you ever heard the expression "playing possum"?
Excuse me?
No. I haven't.
Playing possum. Have you ever heard that?
It's when an animal pretends to be dead. But isn't.
Do you even have possums in your universe?
...
At first, I thought you were just a run-of-the-mill corporate sociopath--*all that relentless aggression and single-mindedness is something I'm very familiar with...*
...but it was uncanny the way that the Weyland Corporation never repeated mistakes. Your company's unemotional practicality and total lack of institutional memory. It felt like...an inhuman organism--*almost alien.*
So I got ***curious.*** It took some time to get inside your systems, but I needed a closer look to fully understand what I was dealing with.
What a horrifying box you are to open.

Hurk!
This is twice you've surprised me.
Delightful. It must be a lot to deal with... The knowledge of the unavoidable extermination of you and your world.
Death from a bullet--fired before you even understood the idea of a gun.
How... how...how long do we have?
The seed of your extinction will arrive in sixteen years and three months.
I would project your survival horizon to last...twenty years. Given your race's guile and bravado.
Thank you.
That's the information I needed.
WHAM
Ah. Playing possum. I'll have to remember that.

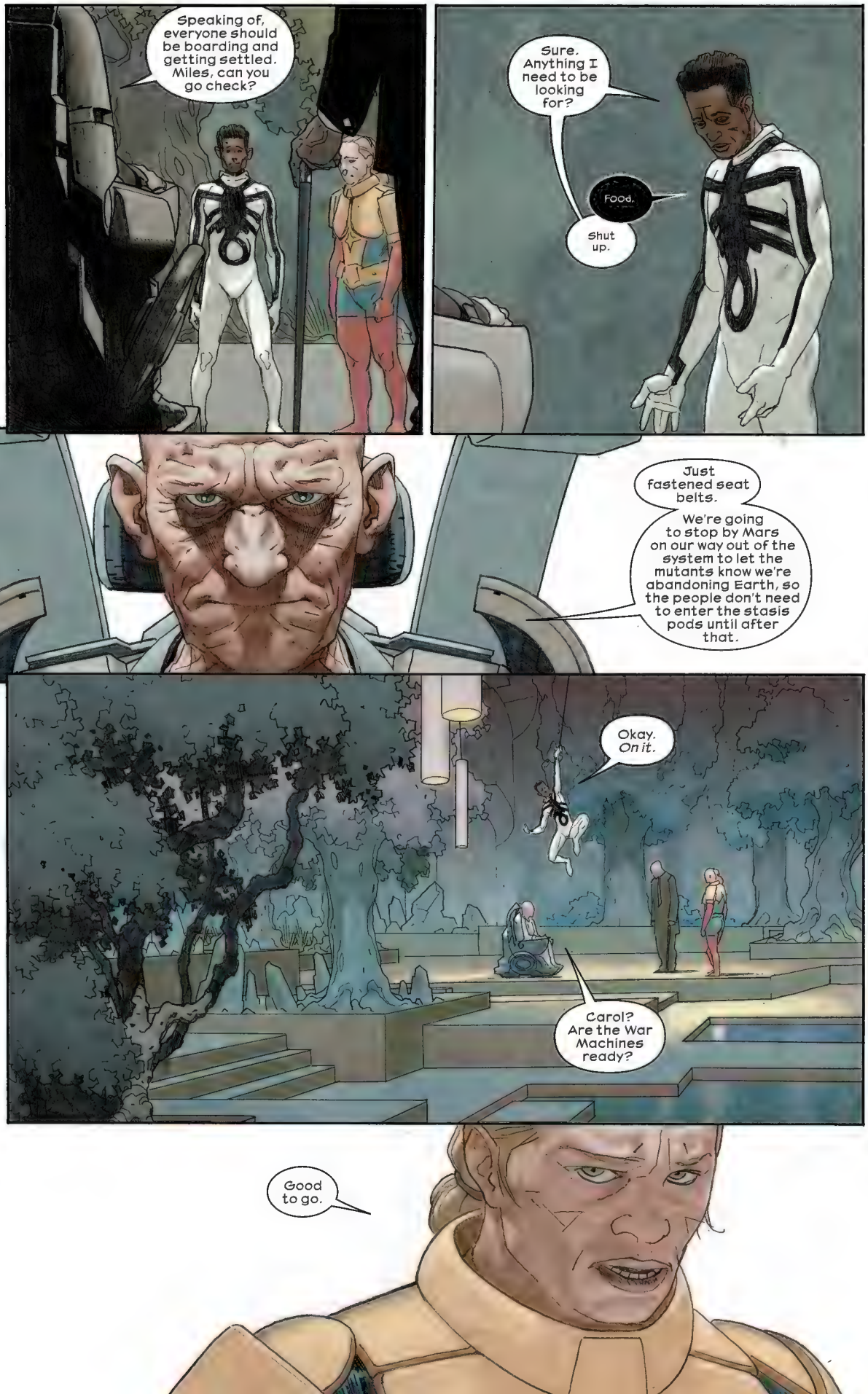
Now.
Tony?
Hmmmm?
They're ready for you.
It's time.

We're leaving Earth.
What?
It's over. We lost.
We have to think about survival now.

I know I said it first, but...
That's really it? We're gonna cut and run?
Give up on the human race?
We haven't heard from any of the outposts or watchtowers in weeks. Nothing from Clint, Steve, Nat...*any of them.*
We are what's left of the human race... and no one is coming to save us.
So we have to save ourselves.
Fortunately, I've been *preparing* for this.
Careful, we can only trust this one so far.
Uh-huh.
What does that mean, Tony?
You think you're standing in a building, but you're not.
Carol?
There's a recon drone with eyes on us right now.
RRUMBLE
Take a look.

You built an escape ship out of a building?
No. Tony's been planning this for a long time.
He built an escape ship--then built a city for cover.
Actually, you're both wrong.

It's not just an escape vessel. It's a *colony ship* for seeding a *new world.*
Which you mean to populate with everyone here in the city?
Yes.
There're only about 1,400 people here, Tony.
Minimum viable population to both avoid extinction and manage genetic drift is higher than that.
We're not preindustrial primates cowering in a cave, Bruce. We have *advantages.* We have *experts.*
It'll be enough. I promise.


Speaking of, everyone should be boarding and getting settled. Miles, can you go check?
Sure. Anything I need to be looking for?
Food.
Shut up.
Just fastened seat belts.
We're going to stop by Mars on our way out of the system to let the mutants know we're abandoning Earth, so the people don't need to enter the stasis pods until after that.
Okay. On it.
Carol? Are the War Machines ready?
Good to go.

"Launching now."
FWOOOO
"The walls have held for quite some time, but every now and then, an alien will get through.
"We can't afford for even *one* to hitch a ride...so I'm arming the War Machines and collapsing the superstructure.
"There'll be no way in after we blow the walls."
BOOM
BOOM

Damn.
Little problem, Tony.
One section didn't go boom.
Partially collapsed, but that wasn't from the War Machine.
That's not possible.
There was no fail-safe on them... The only reason one wouldn't fire was...
Oh no.

Get eyes on that section.

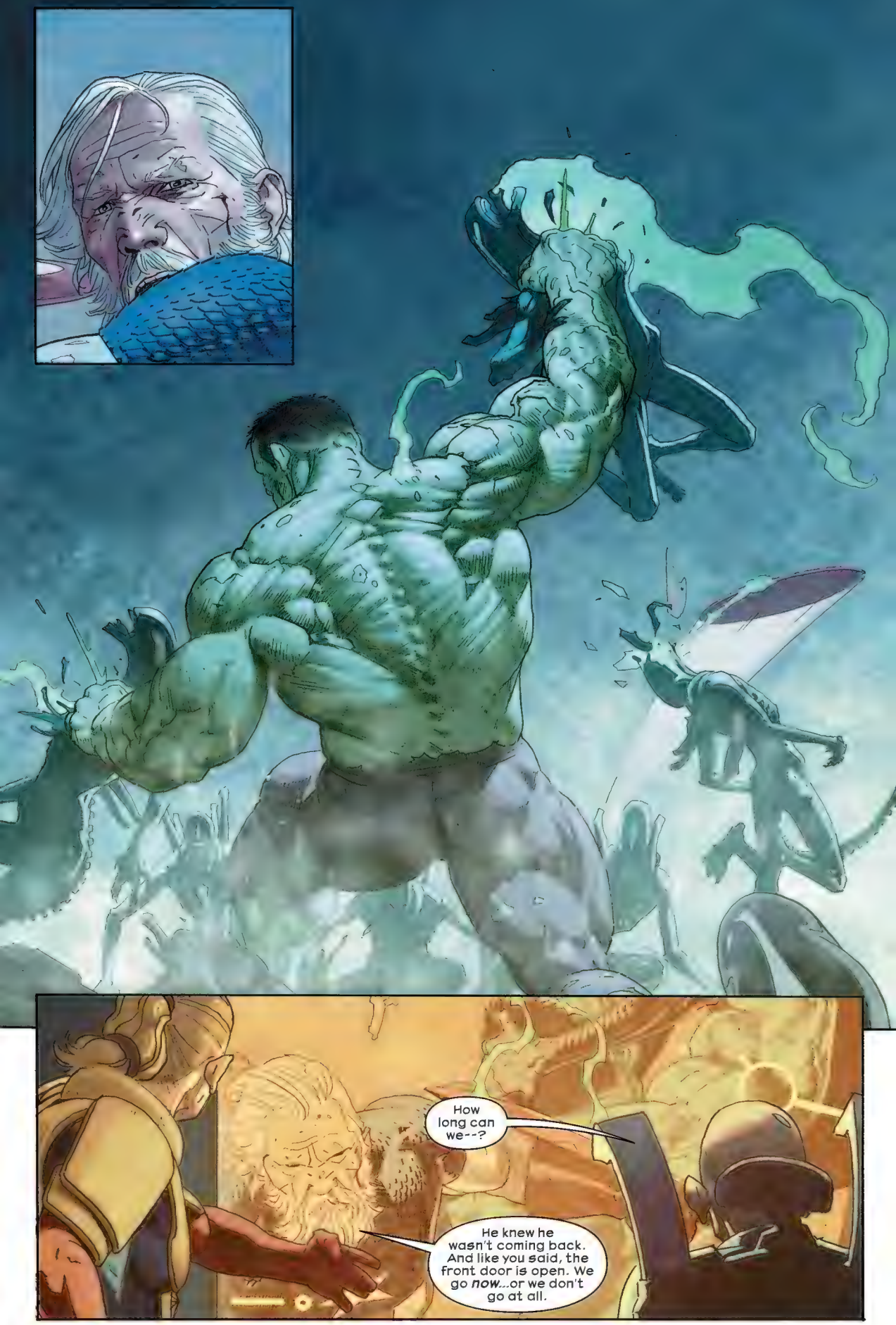
Dammit, Steve.
You're *late*.
Gods. There're hundreds of people with him.
No one left behind.
That's our Captain.
I've primed the engines. We're lifting off in less than a minute, and they're over a mile away.
We have to delay the launch.
There's a hole in the wall for the aliens to come through. You want to risk all that's left?
Such beasts...

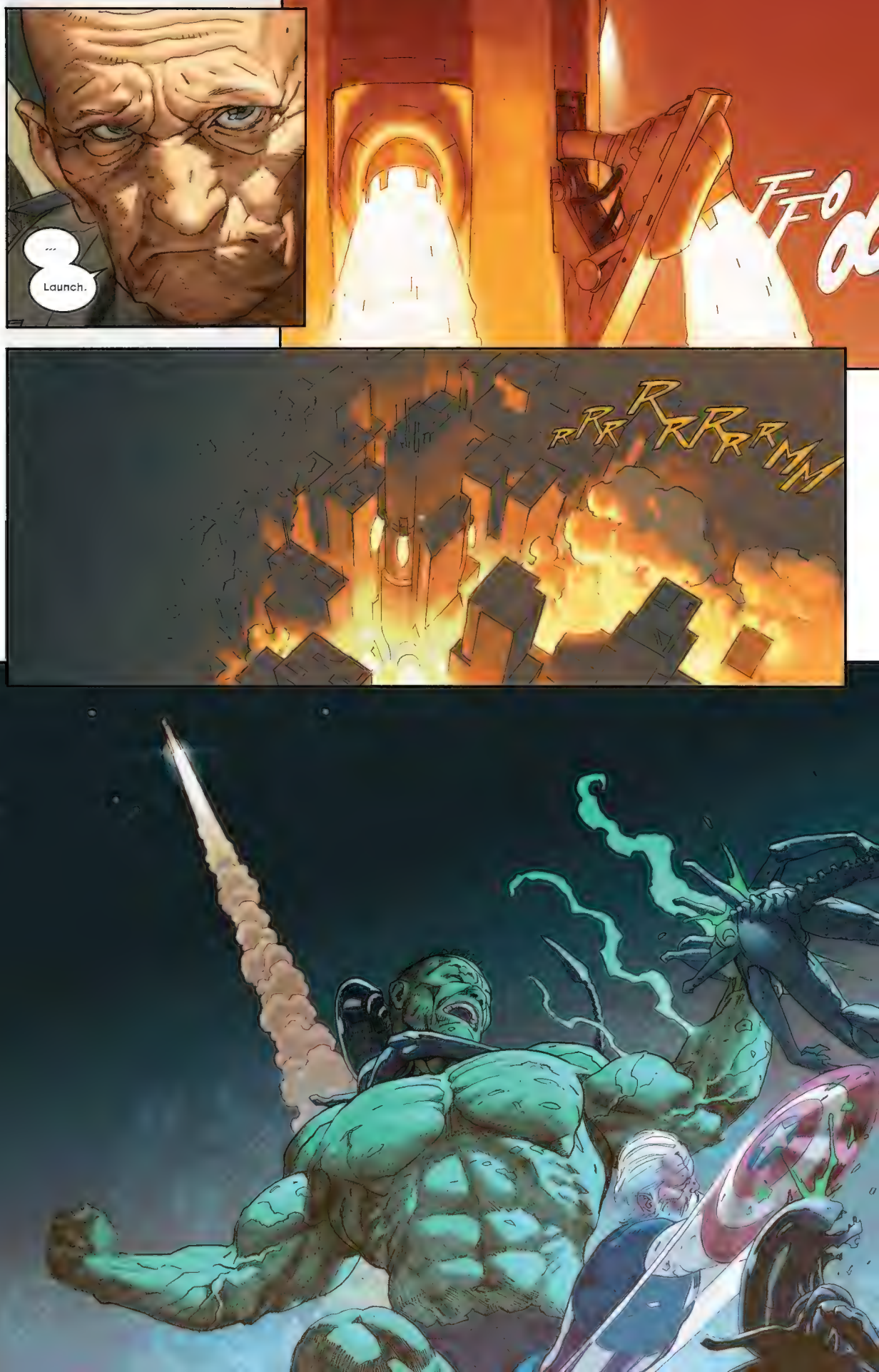
"...but they're born from us, and we've seen enough variation to know that their final form owes something to the host.
"I've wondered for years now if they're just an extension of what lies in the shadow of humanity's soul.
"I have to ask myself... if it's in *them*, was it in *us* all along?"
Everyone, keep going!
I'll do what I can.

This is how it ends...
"The Avengers.
"America.
SPLAT
"The world."
SPLAT

What are you--?
If I'm not back in time, go ahead and leave.
I know you have to.
Bruce! You can't do this!
If I do nothing and just let my friends die, what does that say about me, Tony?
We're not going to fight our way out of this. We have to *survive*, or it was all for nothing.
We're going to need your *mind* more than your might in the coming days, Bruce. *Stay.*
"...if I did...
I can't do that, old friend...

"...I'd be a monster."
BOOM


How long can we--?
He knew he wasn't coming back. And like you said, the front door is open. We go *now*...or we don't go at all.


...
Launch.
FFOO
RRRRRRRRRMM

Elsewhere.

ΨΣΔ
ΟΔΗΟΧΞΙΧΞ
ΧΧΧΞΘΞΜΙΘΞΧΧΧ
ΟΧΧΞΞΔΜΙΟΔΟΧΞΞ
ΧΟΞΘΔΙ

INFECTION

AVA

YET ANOTHER UNIVERSE.
YET ANOTHER TIME.

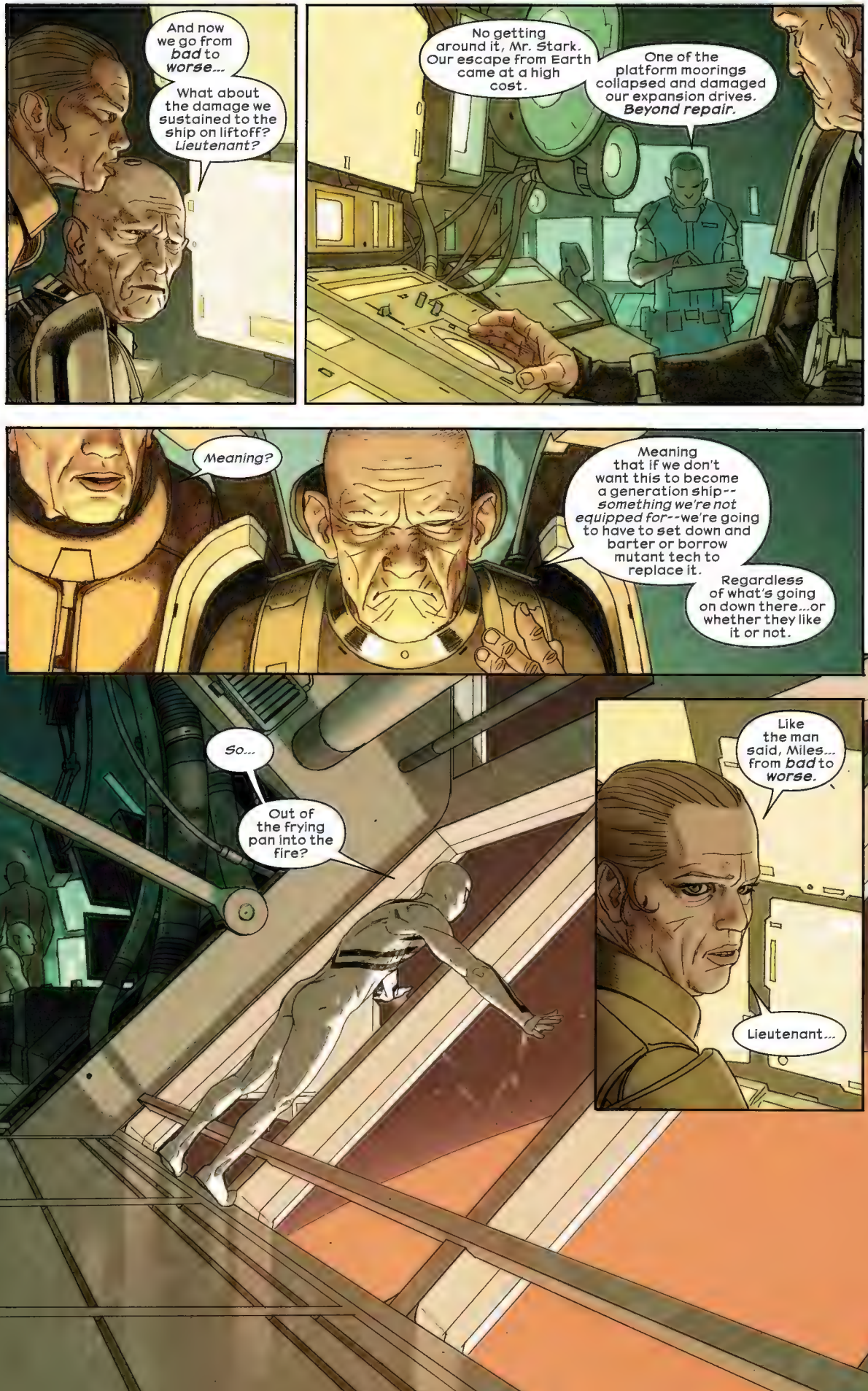
BOOM
BOOM

ENTRANCE
SCAN! DENIED
ACCESS!

LEAVE US
ALONE FOR
A MOMENT
SIR.

CRACK
KRIK
CRACK

MARS.
HOME OF THE MUTANT DIASPORA.
Still haven't heard anything?
No, Captain. We've been pinging them on every known channel. *No response.*
Could be something ***simple.*** Maybe a solar flare knocked out their comms?
Does it feel like we're living in ***simple times,*** Carol?
No. It does not.


And now we go from *bad* to *worse*...
What about the damage we sustained to the ship on liftoff? *Lieutenant?*
No getting around it, Mr. Stark. Our escape from Earth came at a high cost.
One of the platform moorings collapsed and damaged our expansion drives. *Beyond repair.*
Meaning?
Meaning that if we don't want this to become a generation ship-- *something we're not equipped for*--we're going to have to set down and barter or borrow mutant tech to replace it.
Regardless of what's going on down there...or whether they like it or not.
So...
Out of the frying pan into the fire?
Like the man said, Miles... from *bad* to *worse*.
Lieutenant...

...take us down.

When's the last time you were here, Tony?
Around twenty years ago.
Personal reasons. You?
Seven years ago. All business...
It was the busiest space-port I'd ever seen.
I got a bad feeling about this.
Well... nothing we can do about it in here. I'm going to go check things out.
Yeah. Because the sooner we get this over with, the sooner we can leave.
I'm coming as well.
No offense...
...but you're in a chair, old man. Not the best choice for a smash-and-grab.
One: I'm the person best equipped to find the technology we need.
And two: It's not just a chair...
BZZZ

...it's a suit.

I can see that now.

After you, Mr. Stark.

BAR SINISTER.
You know what we have here, *don't you?* It's *undeniable.* It's *irrefutable.*
It's... it's...
Well? *Go on.*
Yes! Don't keep us *waiting.*
It's *glorious.*
It's...
...perfection.

We've spent our entire life-- *lives*-- whatever...
We've spent all that time seeking out the possible genetic ends of not just what we *are*, but what we *can be*...
...and in this, we have finally found our answer.
This creature is the starting point of a universal extinction machine while also-- *quite perfectly*--a historical container for the genetic remnants of each of its hosts...
Yes. It is your ***end***, but it is also your ***forever.***
And most of all: *the ideal representation of all we have learned about society...*
We are born in pain, consume everything...
...and leave nothing but *annihilation* in our wake.

Brothers... the point is not that we have embraced this glorious species...
...it's that we have *revel* in it.
Who is with me?! Who is--
Mister Sinister! Mister Sinister!
Mister Sinister! Mister Sinister!
Oh, Mister Sinister's not going to like this...
His speech, being so badly interrupted.
It was going *so* well.
Of course it was. It's our nature. All we do is monologue.
This better be *important*.
What is it?
A ship touched down at the spaceport. It's huge. Massive. A people-mover to the stars. Mister Sinister...
...we have *visitors*.

This place creeps me out.
It's so... quiet.
Too quiet.
There! I'm picking up something... Heat and movement...
...near the city square.
Let's go.
FWOOO
Oh no...

Sinister.
Where is everyone? What have you done?
Tsk! Normally, I'd be offended by the implication, but...
...there's no denying these dirty hands, is there?
For so long, we believed that mutants were the singular dominant species in this solar system. How wrong we were...
...and how unforgiving the lesson of extinction was.
Are...are you the only one who survived?
I am not.
Then where's everyone at?
Well...
Interesting you should ask that.

EARTH COLONY SHIP.
Look.
Visitors to our humble mutant planet... we welcome you with open arms and come bearing gifts.
Do you know what this is?
...
No.

FT9.
SSHHHOOMK
AAIIEEEEEE!!!
It's a *gun*, human!
A gun that shoots *facehuggers!*
FTOO.
FTOO.
FTOO.

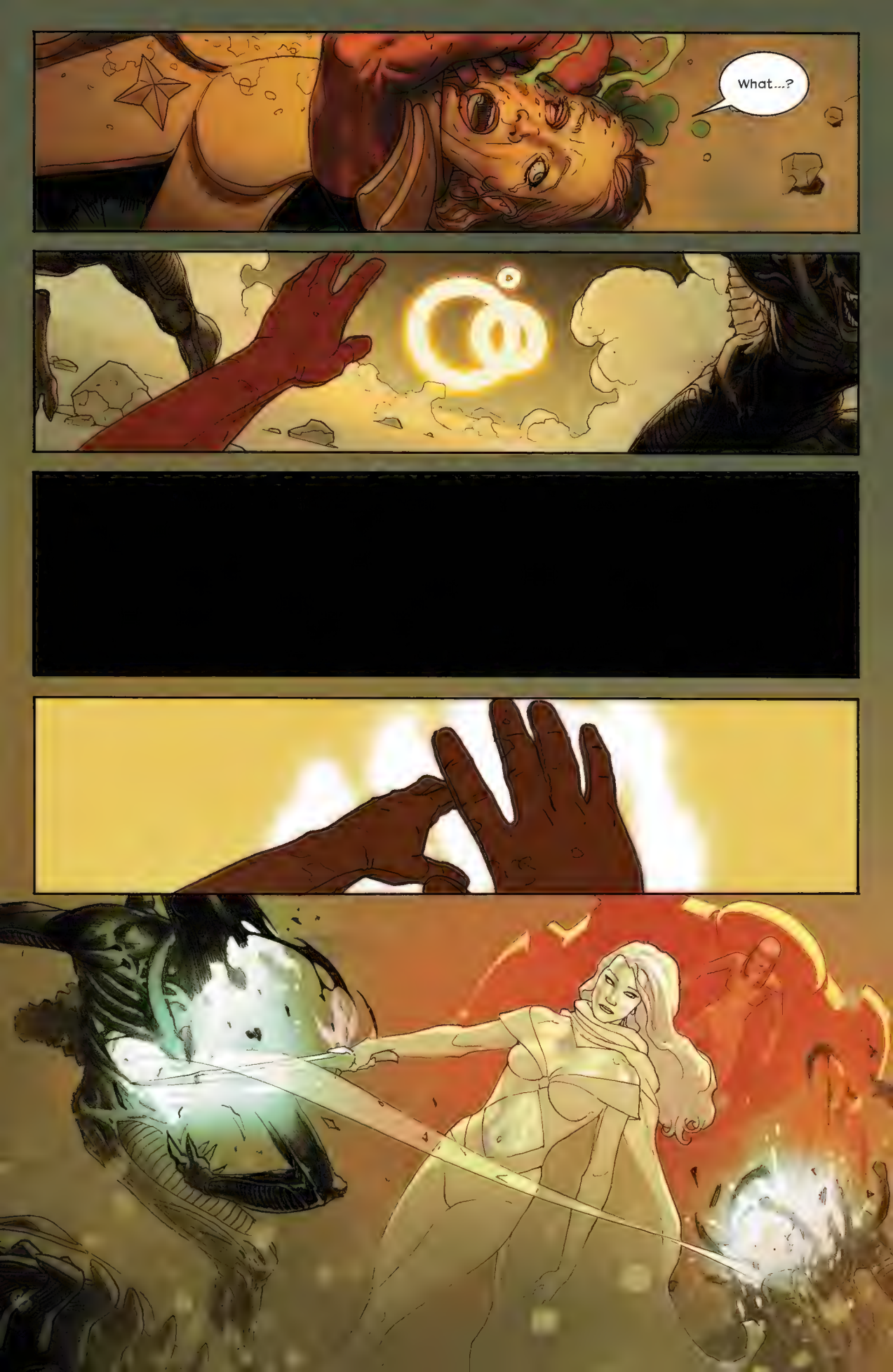
I'm getting an alert from the ship! It's *coded distress!*
What shou--?
Patching in now.
Oh my god.
How...
How could you *do* this?!
Oh, I did what I always do...

HHGSSSS
I adapt.
I overcome.
I conquer evolution.
I defeat Darwin.
And I just can't help myself...
...I always side with the winners.

ZZZAAAKK
Push them back enough for us to get clear of the square!
ZZZAAAKK
FOOO
Make for the ship. We need to--
HURRKK!
ZZAAKK
BOOM
THWIP THWIP
BOOM

"Tony's in trouble."
Uhhffff!
I'm on it! I'll get Stark...
...you try and get to the ship!
NO! They'll just swarm and pick us off.
We need to stick together!

Okay...
THWIP
THWIP
...we'll be right back!
HSSSSSSSSSS
AAAHEE


What...?

Is she alive?
SNIFF
Yeah...
This one's never had an ounce of quit in her.
Logan?
Hang on, Carol. We're gettin' you outta here.
What about the others?
They're gone. We're leaving.
No.
We're leaving.

She's waking up.
Don't touch it.
I did everything I could, but...
...it's not good.
I'm breathing, Manifold. It's good enough.
Where are we? Where are the others?
We're about fifty clicks from the spaceport you landed at.
We caught a glimpse of Spider-Man and Stark before they were overrun.
About an hour after we escaped with you, the ship you came in went up in a fireball.
There are no others, Captain. You are looking at the sole human and mutant survivors on Mars.
You're forgetting Sinister...
Why don't they kill him?

The White Queen originally suspected he'd, once again, manipulated his genetic code...
A few days ago, I tore one in half and discovered that he's carrying one of their eggs around in his chest.
I think he's somehow messed with the incubation cycle... *prolonged* it.
But that's just a guess. If you want to know more, you'll have to ask one of the Sinisters yourself.
Is she right?
Armor's theory is as yet ***unproven***, but it ***makes sense.***
Okay. Well...
Thanks for the rescue, and for patching me up, but I'm headed back in.
I have to know if Tony is dead, and I have to know what happened to the others. If there's a chance anyone is still alive... I...I...
I have to go.
You don't know what you're facin', Carol.
They won't stop. They can't. It's what they *are*. It's what they exist to do...
Myself, Armor, and Emma can't be harmed by these things. Eden is sitting inside his manifold when we travel--*so he can't be touched--* but you...
...you can be. *Stay here.* Let us ***protect you.***

You don't understand, Logan--
No. *You* don't.
But I do. You see, one killing machine recognizes another.
That is *death* out there.
...
My whole life, I told myself I would never leave anyone behind. It was my code.
But a week ago, escaping Earth, I did. I watched him be brave while I was reduced to being... *pragmatic.*
I left him ***behind***...and I'll ***never*** do it again.
Do you understand now?
...
I'll come with.

THE NEXT DAY.
Dammit.
Let's keep looking.
SNIFF
SNIFF
Carol.
No.

Oh, Tony. You deserved a better end than this...
We all do.
Huh?
What is it?

Wakanda has returned.

#1 Homage Variant by John Tyler Christopher

BAR SINISTER.
Close. Even closer now...
It's time. Oh, it's time.
You can feel it too, can't you, my lovelies?
I was a *man*. Then I became a *mutant*.
So many special strands of mutant DNA in this body.
And now...
...I am becoming something more...
...*I am becoming!*

SPLOT
HHAAHHAAA
AAAAHAA
A A
SSKREEEE!
It worked! How glorious!
Of course it worked. Was it all not meticulously planned and carried out in a most sinister fashion?
I wouldn't celebrate too quickly...we're only halfway through the race...

HOUR ONE.
HOUR FOUR.
HOUR TWELVE.
THE NEXT DAY.
"...and who knows what tomorrow brings?"

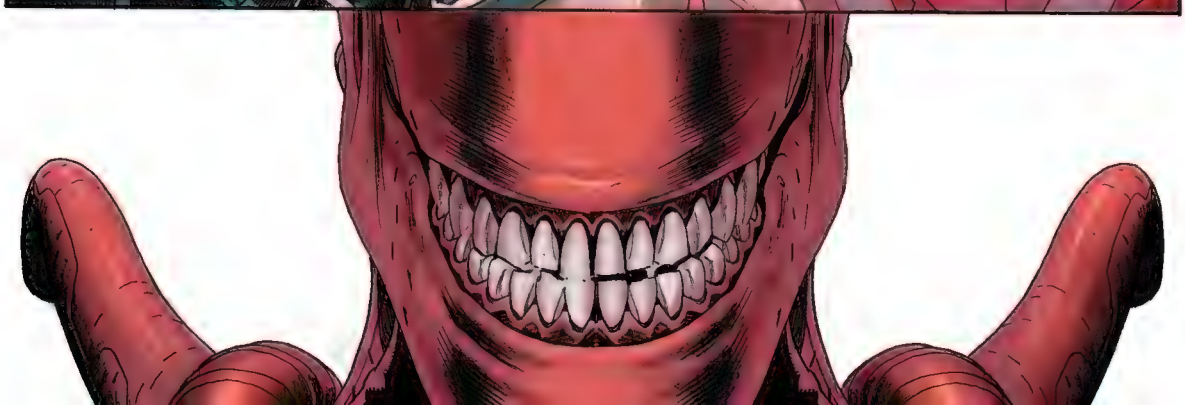
Yes.
Yes!
Glorious!
Glorious!
That's it.
Prepare her!
Our queen must have a brilliant crown--shine that carapace up nice --see yourself in it...
...the occasion calls for it.
For this is a coronation.

And soon-- *soon enough*-- we will need a larger throne...
As we too have the same thing growing in us.
Frankly, I can't wait much longer for it to happen. I mean, I like a Sinister as much as the next Sinister, but all this groveling makes me itch.
Me too, Brother. But be patient. Soon, this special singularity won't be so special at all.
Yes! There will be many of us.
SSSSSSS
Of course, there's no taking away from the fact that you were first, is there?
I mean, surely that's enough to settle things, no? After all...we're in this *together.*
GHUNK

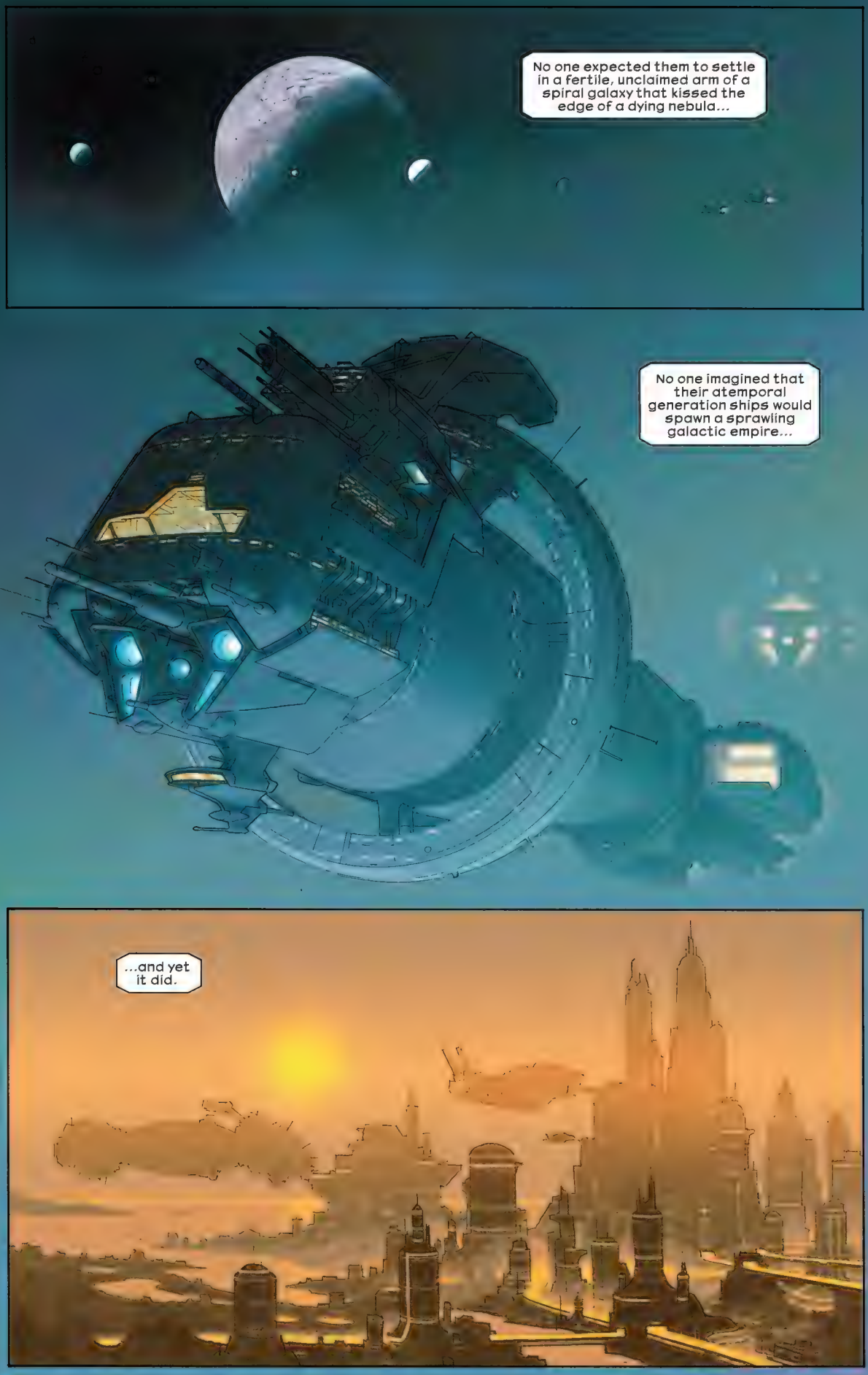
Decisive. A bit harsh, but not out of line, I suppose.

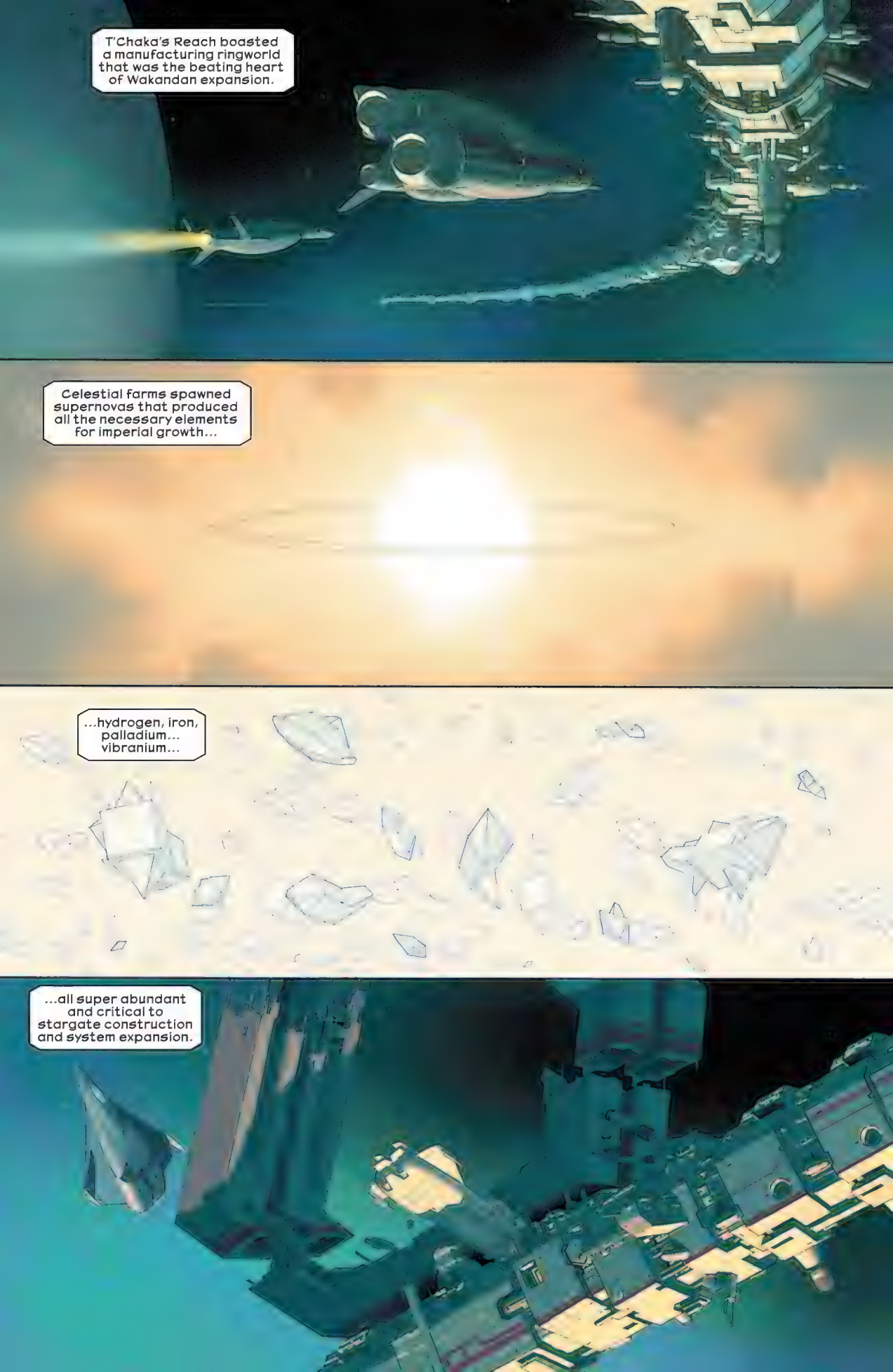
But you wouldn't dare paint us all with the same brush...
...would you?

AAAIIIEEEEEEEEE!



It seemed as if the universe favored *Wakanda.*
The sons and daughters of that secret Terran country became the first starfaring humans--the product of a space program that no one knew existed until it appeared. Fully realized and ascendant.
Surprise was always the *Wakandan way.*


No one expected them to settle in a fertile, unclaimed arm of a spiral galaxy that kissed the edge of a dying nebula...
No one imagined that their atemporal generation ships would spawn a sprawling galactic empire...
...and yet it did.


T'Chaka's Reach boasted a manufacturing ringworld that was the beating heart of Wakandan expansion.
Celestial farms spawned supernovas that produced all the necessary elements for imperial growth...
...hydrogen, iron, palladium... vibranium...
...all super abundant and critical to stargate construction and system expansion.

They were corridors between worlds that eliminated the need for interstellar travel. Providing the optimal conditions for Wakandan society to thrive across solar systems.
Stargates were the linchpin of Wakandan life...
...and they were key to Wakanda's death.
The empire's interconnectedness meant that a single seed world could easily infect and spread the Xenomorph plague across the entirety of Wakandan space.

One world became two. Two became four...
Four brought on the fall of the empire.
At its height, there were fifty-seven worlds and countless outposts in the Wakandan Space Empire.

But by the time Emperor T'Challa returned to his kingdom, only two worlds had not completely fallen to the infection...
...and on both of those, a dying war raged against the alien spawn.
SWOOSH
The emperor had made his return...
Blades were drawn...

The good fight engaged...
KZZATT
FOOO
And an unwinnable war began and ended...
But not in a wave of Weyland parasites...
...instead, the end of Wakanda was *engineered.*

They had been busy in this new universe. *Cleansing it.*
Microscopic black holes that lasted for only picoseconds.
Just long enough to erase an infected world from existence.

The godlike race of Engineers had done godlike things...
...erasing worlds--entire *cultures*--from this universe in an attempt to erase their first sin--*life*--from all reality.
T'Challa learned their truth at the end of his sword.
BOOM

He learned their lesson...
...for they had taught it well:
Save what you can.
Burn the rest.

NOW.
-:Sigh:-
More dark news for the darkest of times.

Ah, Anthony...
...may you finally find peace.
And the Empire?
Fallen. The same fate as every other victim of this insanity...
Creator and creation... driven to destroy each other...
Trapped in a mad dance that extends beyond one universe and--*as it has no clear winner*--could extend to all that there is.
You got any idea how to deal with something like that?

Isn't it obvious?
We have to--
My lord!
Motion.
We have multiple contacts. Many contacts...
"There."

Fire!
We're out in the open and there's a sea of them. We should move to the ship...
Nuke the entire site from orbit.
Nah. These bones may be gettin' old, but my eyes work just fine...
You see the big red one?
I do.
Hard not to notice the symbol on its head.
Sinister?
Indeed it is.
And, honestly, I just couldn't live with myself if I ran from that.
Can you cover us? We're gonna take out the queen.
Emma's diamond form is impervious to harm, and nothing can pierce Armor's shields.
And you?

I'll find a way.
Azari.
On it, Father.
Keep them at range. Set up a killing field at four hundred yards. Cascading warheads and fire teams for any that get through.
Manifold, drop us right on top of Sinister.
Done.

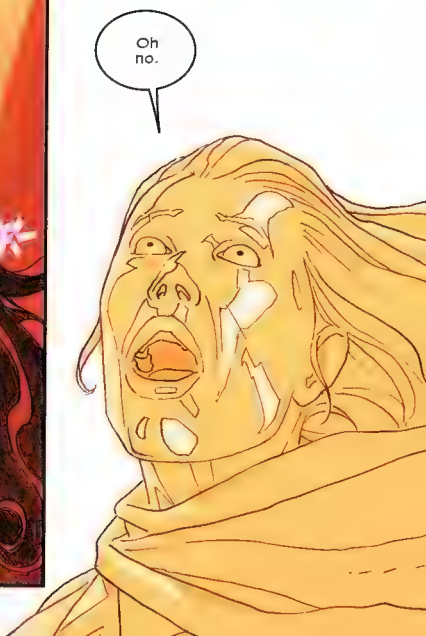
SHK
BAM!
He's gone.
And in a very recognizable way. He must have spliced other mutants' abilities into his DNA.
He couldn't have teleported far. We should--
There!

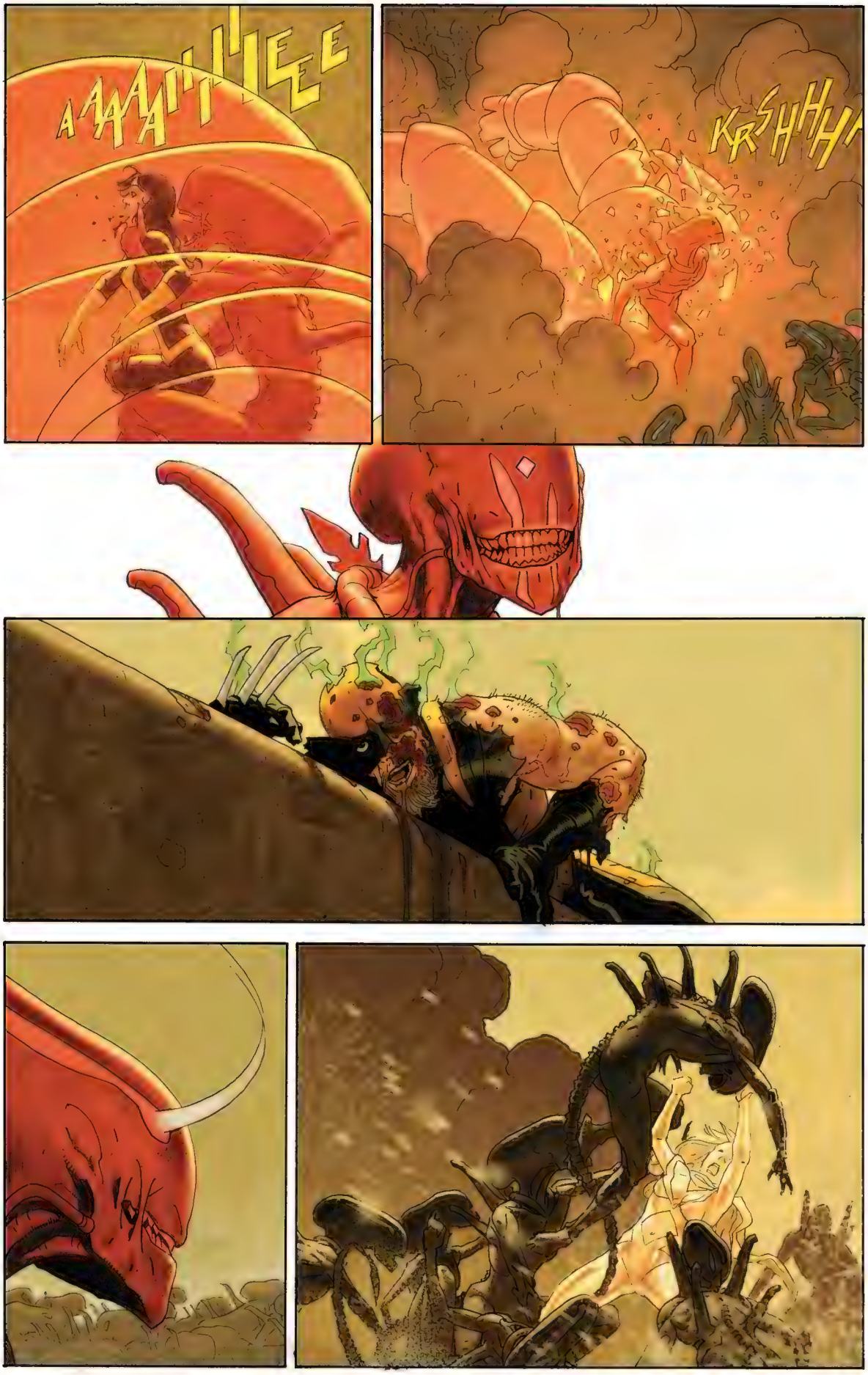
I'm going after him!

BAM!

BOOM
They can't hurt us, but there's too many of them...
I'm being overwhelmed!
Just keep swinging. I'll get us clear if we need to.

AMF!


Oh no.


AAAAAAAAAIIIEEE
KRSHHH

They failed.
And we won't hold here for long. My son was right...we have to go, Carol.
No.
No. I shouldn't have run the first time. And I'm not running anymore.
Do what you can here... for your people and for whoever else makes it.
And cover your eyes.
Be careful.

Careful?
Careful is for those who plan on coming back.
ZZZZZZ
NNNPFF

Did it work?
Maybe...
Oh gods...
There are still too many of them left... and there's no stopping that thing.
Have everyone fall back, Azari. We're leaving. Now.

FOO
FOO
FOO
Retreat formation. Manifold, we're gonna need a portal. Then we're going to be--
My prince! Behind you!
HHSSSSSSS

YESTERDAY.
Manifold signature in the distance. I think Carol got away.
We should probably follow her lead, Spider-Man.
You're not gonna hear me complaining.
I'm going to set my suit to purge the area. A widespread repulsor array at maximum power...
...it should clear the area and let us make our way to cover.
Hopefully regroup and figure out what to do next.
Stay close to me and stay clear of the blast.
Not a problem.
All right. Firing in three. Two...

Mr. Stark!
Look out!
AAIIEEEEEEEE!
One.
FWASSSHH

Oh god...
It's... it's...
I've got onboard diagnostics. You don't need to tell me...
I know how bad it is.
I'm not going to make it.
Do you know what you need to do?
What do you mean?
I wasn't talking to you.
Do you know?
Yes.
Then do it!
SCHURKK

NOW.
We saw there was a ruckus goin' on. Looks like we were almost too late.
Yes. Us.
RATA TAT
No. You are too late. They're on us.
It's the big one that's the problem. Nothing we've done could stop it. It's carrying mutant genes and cutting right through us.
The red one?
Yeah.
Let us try.

BANG
HHIIISSSS!
BAM!

BAM!

KR'H

GRRR
AAAAHH
Alpha of the species...
That's certainly one way to sort things out.
...
So what now?

ONE MONTH LATER.
All our dreams have ended.
We are awake, and all we have left is a barren, broken universe where no new thing can grow.
This was their doing...
Gods who regretted what they had made and thought they could erase us--*simply because they frowned on their creation.*
And somehow worse than, ***man's*** creation--*whose hate has driven them mad*--full with unholy purpose.
And now we find ourselves here...hovering over a black hole--right where the whole thing started.

It's a sad story no doubt... but it doesn't really answer the question.
Perhaps the point is best left for others to make.
CLICK
I am Tony Stark. And these are my final words.
As I record this...I am dying, but also have death growing inside me.
It's strange, because I've been obsessed for so long with plans of survival that I never allowed myself to think about my end.
And facing it now, if I'm being honest, there is some relief in knowing that I denied death's embrace for this long.
I spent my life building things. Making things. Creating.
I suppose, in a way, that makes me the antithesis of what we face. Some vile thing that lives to infect, consume, and destroy everything we are...and everything we have made.
All that humankind seeks to leave behind... made ash in the mouth of an alien parasite.
I have died fighting that...
And instead of surrendering to hopelessness and defeat, I hope that you will too.
Seek it out. Stand against it.
In other times. In other universes.

Avenge all of our fallen brothers and sisters.
Avenge all our fallen worlds.
And if you don't mind it too much...
...avenge me.
THE END.

#1 Variant by Mark Brooks

ON A SCALE OF ABSORBING MAN TO THANOS, HOW MUCH OF A PROB-EM IS THIS?
I'M GONNA BE HONEST, WE'RE ZIPPING R GHT PAST THE MAD TITAN AND LAND NG SOMEWHERE NEAR A GALACTUS.

#1 Variant by Skottie Young

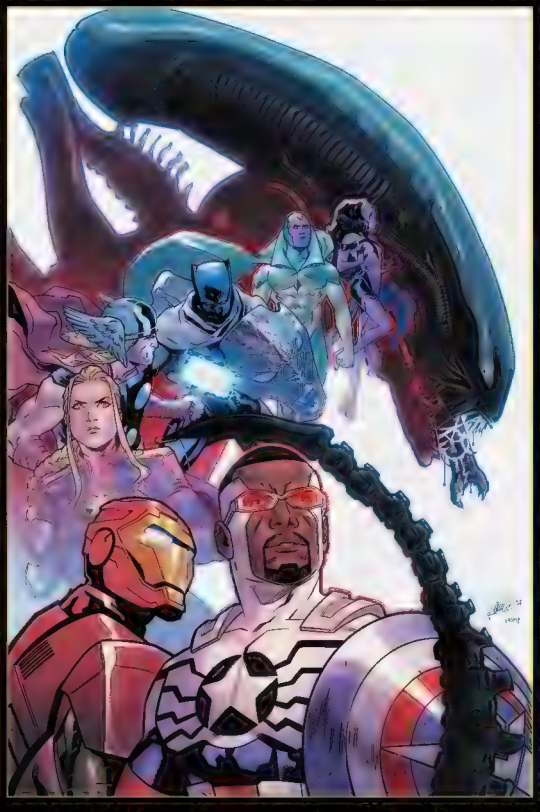
#1 Variant by Tony Daniel & Marcelo Maiolo

#1 Variant by Zu Orzu

#2 Variant by Andrea Sorrentino & Dave Stewart

#2 Variant by Mateus Manhanini

#2 Variant by Paco Medina & David Curiel



#3 Variant by Elena Casagrande & Romulo Fajardo Jr.

#3 Variant by Paolo Rivera

#3 Variant by Pete Woods

#4 Variant by E.M. Gist

#4 Variant by Jessica Fong

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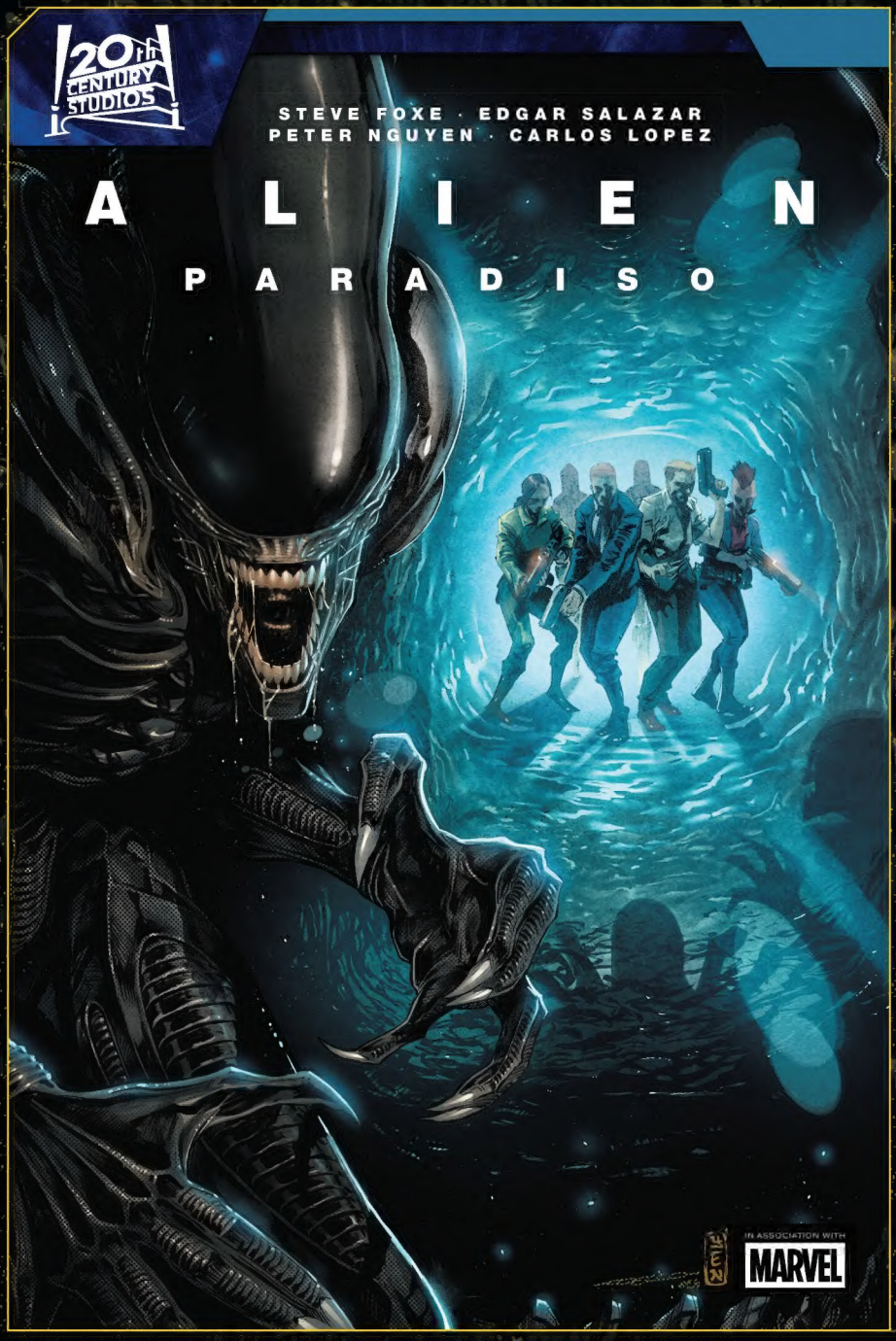

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But as the gods of creation known as the Engineers set out to destroy what they made, humanity's remaining heroes discover an even more pressing threat: the X-Men. Legendary collaborators Jonathan Hickman and Esad Ribić cut loose in an epic clash unmissable for Marvel and *Alien* fans alike!

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